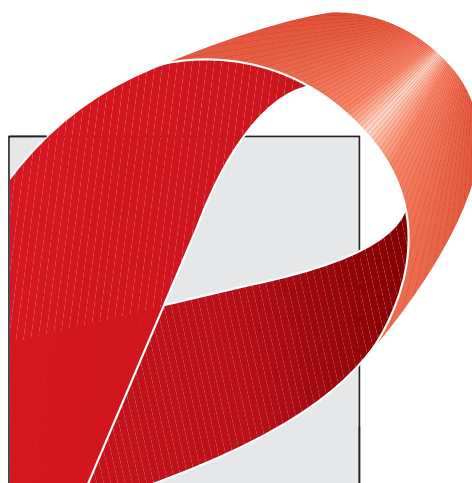
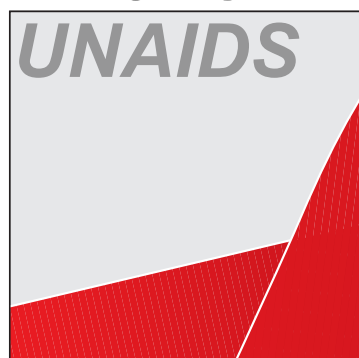


FACTS *about* **UNAIDS**



UNAIDS in individual countries

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UNAIDS is the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, it is cosponsored by six UN system organizations: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Bank.

Through its own staff in Geneva and the field, and together with its cosponsors and other partners around the world, UNAIDS leads and catalyses an expanded response to the epidemic to improve prevention and care, reduce people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and alleviate the epidemic's devastating social and economic impact.

How UNAIDS can strengthen the national response

National governments have the primary responsibility for dealing with HIV/AIDS within their own borders, even though many individuals and groups – from government as well as the wider society – must be part of the national response. The role of UNAIDS is to strengthen the ability of countries to respond to the epidemic, and to coordinate the UN system's support to that end.

To be effective, the national response must be broad-based and multisectoral. AIDS remains an important health issue, but many of the causes and consequences of the epidemic lie outside the health sector. With its unique, collaborative approach, UNAIDS can support countries in the following ways as they mount an expanded response to the epidemic:

- By advocating more effectively for the introduction of AIDS issues into the country's health, economic and social development agendas. Each UN organization can work with its major counterparts to promote cross-sectoral collaboration.
- By involving a greater number of partners in AIDS activities. Each UN organization can help involve partners not yet participating in the response to the epidemic, including government departments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector.
- By allocating resources more efficiently and effectively in support of national efforts. Working together, the UN organizations can identify overlaps, gaps and opportunities for integrating AIDS into related programmes.

- By making better use of local and regional technical expertise available in the UN system.

Country-level operations at a glance

UNAIDS is a small, catalytic programme rather than a new agency. Its structure and way of working are predicated on partnerships, first and foremost with its own six cosponsoring organizations and the wider UN system. Every effort is made to avoid duplicating mechanisms or structures that exist already.

The UN Resident Coordinator System was established by the decision of the General Assembly. The UN Resident Coordinator has the responsibility for the coordination of the UN system's operational activities for development at the national level, including HIV/AIDS-related activities in cooperation with the host government.

Accordingly, in developing countries and the economies in transition, UNAIDS operates through the existing UN Resident Coordinator system. The Resident Coordinator establishes a UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS composed of the resident representatives (heads) of all UNAIDS cosponsors present in the country. The host government is invited to participate. This interagency group then meets regularly to coordinate and strengthen UN system support to national action against AIDS.

In many countries the Theme Group has, or will have, the help of a UNAIDS Country Programme Adviser, who also provides basic programme support to the country's HIV/AIDS activities. In other countries, a cosponsor staff member should be designated as the UNAIDS Focal Point to assist the Theme Group in its work. In addition, UNAIDS operates intercountry technical teams that can be called on, and provides direct support from its main office in Geneva.

At country level, therefore, UNAIDS can best be seen as the sum of the AIDS-related activities carried out by its six cosponsors with the backing of UNAIDS staff, technical guidance and other resources.

UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS

The UN theme group is a mechanism that coordinates the development activities of the various UN organizations present in the country and helps it make the best use of the UN system. In many countries, UN theme groups work on subjects such as population, gender, environment and basic education.

UNAIDS operates in countries through the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS. By September 1996, 116 Theme Groups had been launched covering 132 countries.

***Peter Piot, Executive Director, UNAIDS:
“Ten years ago, expertise in AIDS
prevention and care was concentrated in
relatively few industrialized countries.
Today, the face of AIDS work is radically
different. Many countries have built up
considerable experience and expertise that
can be tapped.”***



Theme Group membership and participation

The resident representatives (heads) of all UNAIDS cosponsors present in the country are automatically members of the Theme Group on HIV/AIDS. Other UN organizations working on AIDS-related activities should be encouraged to join as members.

The national government should always be invited to participate in a manner it deems appropriate.

The Chairperson of the Theme Group is appointed by the UN Resident Coordinator after full consultation with all Theme Group members, and in a spirit of consensus. The chair is expected to rotate annually or biennially.

The Theme Group maintains constant communication with the national coordinating body on HIV/AIDS and participates in its meetings as requested by the host government.

It supports the coordinating role of the national coordination body and promotes the increased involvement of other partners in the national response. In doing so the Theme Group works in collaboration with the following:

- nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs)
- groups formed by people living with HIV/AIDS
- other relevant governmental organizations
- bilateral and multilateral agencies
- the private sector
- religious organizations
- academic and research institutions.

In some countries, especially those with coordinating mechanisms that predate the establishment of UNAIDS, the Theme Group may have a different name and somewhat differing membership.

Roles and responsibilities of the Resident Coordinator

The Resident Coordinator – who is usually the UNDP Resident Coordinator – reports to the UN Secretary-General. The Resident Coordinator has overall responsibility and accountability for coordination of the UN system's AIDS-related activities but delegates day-to-day responsibility in the area of HIV/AIDS to the Chairperson of the Theme Group.

Specific responsibilities include:

- establishing and facilitating the work of the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS
- designating the Theme Group Chairperson
- advocating an expanded response at the highest national level
- ensuring that AIDS-related issues are included in the Country Strategy Note
- ensuring an annual review of the support provided by the UN system to the national response on HIV/AIDS, including the work of the Theme Group.

Roles and responsibilities of the Theme Group Chairperson

The Chairperson of the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS provides leadership and ensures that the epidemic remains high on the agenda of all concerned. Specific responsibilities include:

- calling and chairing regular meetings of the Theme Group
- seeing to it that a work plan for the Theme Group is developed, implemented and monitored
- communicating on progress and activities of the Theme Group to the Executive Director of UNAIDS, while keeping the Resident Coordinator informed.

In countries with a Country Programme Adviser (CPA), the Chairperson is the first-level supervisor of the CPA.

Roles of the Theme Group

Theme Groups should meet at least quarterly. Initially, more frequent meetings may be required.

While responding in their own way to the needs and circumstances of the host country, UN Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS generally perform the following tasks:

Information collection, analysis and exchange

- gathering, analysing and sharing information on what each of the cosponsoring organizations is doing of relevance to the epidemic and the programmes in which they are involved.

Advocacy and promotion

- serving as advocates to enlist the financial and political support of every sector of society
- promoting best practices with the host government that will help fight the epidemic, including human rights policies
- promoting UNAIDS policies and activities with other partners in the country
- strongly supporting the representation of NGOs and people living with HIV/AIDS on the national coordinating body.

Joint action and coordination

- developing and implementing a work plan for collaboration and action among Theme Group members
- reviewing HIV/AIDS activities implemented by the cosponsoring organizations
- assessing requests from national partners to the cosponsors for technical or financial support (see “Technical collaboration”, below)
- sharing information and resources with other agencies at the country, intercountry and global levels.

Theme Group working groups

Given the often heavy workload carried by agency heads, the Theme Group may create a permanent working group made up of staff designated by the resident representatives of each cosponsor. The working group oversees the cosponsors’ day-to-day joint or collaborative activities and reports back to the Theme Group.

In addition, technical working groups may be created, when and as required, to carry out joint planning and implementation of activities in a specific area. Such groups bring together technical staff from UN organizations participating in the Theme Group, national technical staff, NGOs, people living with HIV/AIDS, and bilateral donor agencies. Often, instead of creating new groups, it is preferable to integrate HIV/AIDS into

the activities of existing UN working groups or Theme Groups, such as those on population issues or on gender in development.

Subjects for technical working groups would typically include: human rights; gender issues; care and support; activities related to World AIDS Day; resource mobilization; integration of STD services into maternal/child health and family planning; sex and AIDS education in schools; AIDS and the workplace; and societal influences on the epidemic.

Coordination in individual countries

The coordination structure for UN organization support to individual countries consists of:

- A Theme Group, composed of the resident representatives (heads) of the UNAIDS cosponsors and other UN organizations, and with the participation of the host government's national coordinating body on HIV/AIDS and other key groups. Focus: policy and strategy decisions, and joint advocacy.

In addition, the Theme Group may set up one or more of the following to facilitate action:

- A permanent working group composed of designated staff from the cosponsors. Focus: day-to-day coordination and joint action.
- Technical working groups around topics of common interest. These groups are composed of technical staff employed by the participating UN organizations and the national coordination body, as well as staff from relevant NGOs, bilateral donors, and people living with HIV/AIDS. Focus: joint planning and implementation.

UNAIDS Country Programme Advisers and UNAIDS Focal Points

UNAIDS Country Programme Advisers (CPAs), recruited at the national level or internationally, are posted in developing countries or economies in transition. Most have responsibility for a single country, while some cover two or more countries. The CPA normally works in the office of the Resident Coordinator or one of the cosponsors, but often also has office space with the national coordinating body on HIV/AIDS.

The CPA's overall responsibilities are to:

- support the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in coordinating the UN system's contribution to the national response to the epidemic

- provide direct technical support to the national response where appropriate
- coordinate the provision of other technical support to the national response as requested to the Theme Group
- ensure the implementation of UNAIDS policies.

In countries where no CPA has been posted, the Theme Group should designate a UNAIDS Focal Point from the staff of one of the cosponsors. The UNAIDS Focal Point receives support and orientation from the UNAIDS staff in Geneva, from intercountry teams and from nearby CPAs.

Roles in relation to the UN system

UNAIDS Country Programme Advisers and UNAIDS Focal Points have the following roles vis-à-vis the UN system.

- Assist Theme Group members to identify programme areas which contribute to AIDS prevention, care and impact alleviation, and which draw on the comparative areas of expertise of each member.
- Establish and maintain a database on country-level AIDS-related operations of UN organizations and, where appropriate, other external partners.
- Assist members of the Theme Group to coordinate their support to the country, and to jointly plan, implement, and evaluate their contributions to the national response. This includes initiating technical working groups on appropriate topics.
- Assist Theme Group members and other partners with the coordination of external support to the country, including local fund-raising.
- Promote UNAIDS policies and strategies through the Theme Group and help adapt them to local needs and situations.
- Assist the Chairperson to oversee the programming of funds entrusted to the Theme Group from various sources.
- Liaise with UNAIDS Geneva and other CPAs on technical matters.

Roles in relation to the national response

UNAIDS Country Programme Advisers and UNAIDS Focal Points work with the Theme Group to in the following roles.

- Assist in identifying needs for technical support and collaboration capable of strengthening the national capacity for an expanded, multisectoral response to the epidemic.
- Assist the government and other national partners by providing technical and managerial support within her or his areas of expertise, and coordinate the provision of other required support.
- Promote and facilitate the involvement of all relevant partners in the national response to the epidemic.
- Promote, develop and strengthen networks among all partners, with a particular focus on communities and on people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Participate in AIDS policy development both locally and globally by providing feedback to UNAIDS Geneva on national and regional responses to the epidemic.

Reporting and channels of communication

UNAIDS Country Programme Advisers are employees of UNAIDS but report in the first instance to the Chairperson of the Theme Group and, through him/her, to the UNAIDS Director of Country Support in Geneva and to the Resident Coordinator. Full formal reports are made to UNAIDS in Geneva every six months, while informal contacts are maintained on a more regular basis. For CPAs with responsibility for more than one country, the first-level supervisor is the Theme Group Chairperson in the country where the CPA is based.

As appropriate, the CPA communicates requests from the national coordinating body to the Theme Group, to the relevant cosponsors, or to UNAIDS staff at intercountry or global level. On technical matters the CPA communicates directly with UNAIDS staff at the intercountry or global level.

Technical collaboration

Technical collaboration can be facilitated through a variety of channels including direct support to countries, forums for sharing experiences, and intercountry exchange visits. UNAIDS assists countries to find the most appropriate technical support through sources in the country and through UN staff available in the region and globally. In addition, UNAIDS collaborates with bilateral and nongovernmental partners in the provision of technical support.

Requests for direct technical support should be channelled through and assessed by the Theme Group.

To facilitate the best use of locally available expertise, the UNAIDS Country Programme Adviser or Focal Point prepares an inventory of technical expertise available at country and intercountry or regional level. This is done in consultation with the national counterparts and with the cosponsors at country level.

Such inventories are made available globally through the UNAIDS main office in Geneva.

Administrative support

The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS and the in-country staff of UNAIDS are usually supported administratively by cosponsoring organizations present in the country. This is in line with the understanding that, at country level, UNAIDS should rely on its cosponsors rather than create separate administrative structures. Administrative support typically includes the use of available cosponsor facilities such as office space, office equipment, vehicle pool, and the services of support staff.

Such contributions are worked out on a case-by-case basis, and vary with the resources available to the cosponsors in each country. In some countries, UN Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS and UNAIDS staff receive complete support from the co-sponsors. In others it is necessary for UNAIDS to share the cost of such support, or to cover direct costs completely.

Agreements with UNDP and WHO

UNAIDS has signed an agreement with WHO for providing administrative support to UNAIDS at the global level. UNAIDS has also signed an agreement with UNDP whereby this cosponsor provides administrative services for UNAIDS activities at country level. Accordingly, UNAIDS funds for use at country level are routed through WHO to UNDP field offices.

In the agreement with UNDP, the following services are provided as needed:

- Personnel Services such as recruiting and administering local support staff.
- General Administrative Services including, for example, pouch facilities; travel services; maintenance of UNAIDS vehicles; support to meetings/seminars/training courses; procurement services;

customs clearance; telephone and fax. Country Programme Advisers will also be assisted in finding office space, utilities, office equipment and furniture.

- Disbursement Services providing UNAIDS with the mechanisms to disburse funds at country level.

The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS is responsible for monitoring all UNAIDS funds disbursed at country level.

A model for sharing

In Pakistan, all UNAIDS cosponsors have pledged to contribute to a common fund from their country budgets to cover all logistical and operational costs of the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS and UNAIDS staff in country. This model is being adopted by other countries.

Resource mobilization

UNAIDS is calling for an expanded response to the epidemic at a time of shrinking resources for all development programmes. A major role of UNAIDS at country level is to help countries mobilize resources for the national response to the epidemic and optimize their use. To that end, the Theme Group undertakes the following activities:

- advocacy with the national government to encourage a greater allocation of the national budget to AIDS activities
- establishing links with donor agencies and funding organizations to encourage their greater involvement;
- establishing links between country-level and regional programmes and activities
- encouraging innovative approaches to resource mobilization, especially mobilization of resources from the private sector.

UNAIDS is exploring a range of approaches to enable the UN system in individual countries to handle funds entrusted to the Theme Group by bilateral, multilateral and donor organizations for HIV/AIDS programmes. UNAIDS is also developing a series of regional and country-level training workshops on resource mobilization.

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For more information on UNAIDS and its activities, see the documents *UNAIDS – an overview* and *UNAIDS – international best practice and research* in the series **Facts about UNAIDS**.